



Urmston Grammar Sixth Form – Transition Work

English Department

A Level English Literature Transition Work

AQA English Literature Specification B

You can find the full details of the specification here

<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-7716-7717-SP-2015.PDF>

Component 1 Literary Genres

Option 1A: Aspects of Tragedy

Set Texts:

Othello – William Shakespeare

Death of a Salesman – Arthur Miller

The Great Gatsby – F. Scott Fitzgerald

'Lamia', 'Isabella or The Pot of Basil', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 'The Eve of St. Agnes' – John Keats

Tess of the D'Urbervilles – Thomas Hardy

Tragedy has a long tradition in literature, with its origins in the ancient world and with special emphasis on drama. Although there are variations, at the core of all the set texts is often a tragic hero who is flawed on some way, who suffers and causes suffering. In all texts, there is an interplay between what might be seen as tragic villains and tragic victims.

- 1) In preparation for your study of tragedy, we would like you to research the following:
 - The definition of tragedy
 - Three Greek dramatists who wrote in the form of tragedy
 - Aristotle's concept of tragedy. Explain it in your own words.
 - The six formative elements of tragedy. Explain the elements of tragedy.
 - The functions of tragedy
 - The concepts of catharsis, hubris, hamartia
 - Bertolt Brecht's (1898-1956) theory about tragedy
 - The concept of revenge.
 - Medieval perception of tragedy.
- 2) Next, read *Othello*. You can access an online version of *Othello* here: http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/othello_1_1.html . If you wish to buy your own copy, it is recommended that you purchase the Arden edition, ISBN:9781472571762. This is the one we will be using in school. If you can't get hold of this specific edition, don't worry.
- 3) As you are reading the text, consider how your research on tragedy informs your understanding of the characters, the action and the outcomes.
- 4) This activity will prepare you for your 'Initial assessment' which you will sit at the start of Year 12.



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Option 2B: Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing

Set Texts:

The Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood

Selected Poems : 'V', 'National Trust', 'Them and [uz]', 'Divisions', 'Working', 'Marked with D' – Tony Harrison

The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini

A Doll's House (Methuen Drama Student Edition 2008) – Henrik Ibsen (Translated by Michael Meyer)

William Blake - Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Power struggles abound in literature. Political and social-protest writing offers the reader narratives of dominance, oppression, rebellion and resistance and has something to say about the way in which societies are organized. We will be exploring how power is represented in these texts and the effect this has on the characters and what significances arise.

- 5) Set yourself a target of reading at least one of these texts. The ones in bold are the texts we will be focusing on in class.

Component 3: Theory and Independence (coursework)

Literature is representational. This means it does not give us a definitive view of the world that we can say is 'real' or 'true': instead it offers us version of the world which we can, up to a point, recognize, depending of course on our own experiences of the world in the first place. And because literature gives us these versions, these versions, must be ideological in that they encode various attitudes, values, assumptions.

If literature is representational, giving ideological versions of the world, then literary criticism is also ideological, giving versions of texts. These versions arise out of approaches that critics use to analyse the texts in the first place, in other words, literature can be read in different ways. In Component 1 and 2, we take **genre** as a starting point for reading literature. In this component, The Critical Anthology looks at other theoretical ways of reading texts.

You can access AQA's Critical Anthology here:

https://moodle.suttongrammar.sutton.sch.uk/pluginfile.php/5798/mod_resource/content/1/A-level%20English%20Literature%20B%20%287717%29%20-%20Critical%20Anthology%20%281%29.pdf

- 6) Choose one 'way of reading' and read the relevant chapter. Start to have think about books, films, TV programmes, songs, video games. The books don't have to be our set texts, it can be anything you have read recently. How could you interpret them through your 'way of reading'?



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